(c) and (d) Several steps have been taken by the Government/Tea Board for increasing production of tea to meet the domestic requirements and also maintain India's share in world exports. The steps include financial assistance by Tea Board to the tea industry through its various developmental schemes for encouraging extension planting, re-planting, rejuvenation pruning, infilling, creation of irrigation facilities and drainage etc.

With a view to increase exports of tea, the Government/Tea Board have been analysing country-wise exports of tea giving special attention to areas offering potential. Tea Board also acts to remove bottlenecks in exports to individual markets whenever these are noticed. Other steps taken to increase export of Indian tea include:—

(i) participation in major trade fairs/exhibitions abroad.

(ii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness of the speciality of Indian teas and to popularise the Tea Board marketing symbol which stands for pure India tea.

Import from SAARC Nations Under OGL

542. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have allowed the import of 200 items from SAARC nations under OGL;

(b) whether this arrangement will allow the import of Srilankan tea to India at concessional rates; and

(c) if so, what will be the impact of this decision on the Indian industry.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) The Government has allowed import of 2307 items under OGL from SAARC nations vide Public Notice No.25(PN)/97-02 dated 01.08.1998.

The said Public Notice only allows free import of items restricted for reasons of Balance of Payments without any concessions in duty.